

The Origin of Nullarbor.—Mr. W. B. Alexander, M.A., C.F.A.O.U., formerly keeper of Biology, Perth Museum, and now in charge of the prickly pear experimental station, Westwood, near Rockhampton, in a letter states: "Nullarbor should be spelt Nullabor. Sir John Forrest was the first to see the Nullabor Plains, and I heard him say that he was greatly amused that people should think he had made the name from the Latin *nulla arbor* (no tree) as he did not know enough Latin to coin such a word. It was an aboriginal name, probably connected with nulla-nulla (a club).

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Magpie Cannibalism.—Mention in the April number of *The Emu* of the Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) killing a Sparrow recalls to mind two cases of Magpie cannibalism I have witnessed. Some years ago I noticed the Tasmanian lesser-white backed Magpie sitting on a post with a Sparrow in its beak, and on being disturbed, it dropped the unfortunate victim, which when picked up was almost dead. On another occasion a year or so later, I happened to be breaking down a patch of tall Scotch thistles when a Pipit flew out from beneath my feet, uncovering a nest of three dark-brown spotted eggs. In order to delude me, the bird feigned a broken wing for a minute, dragging itself slowly through the grass some yards away. At that moment a Magpie flashed down and picked up the little bird before it could get away, and flying off, stopped on a fence some distance away, where it killed and devoured its victim.—M. S. R. SHARLAND, R.A.O.U., Hobart.

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The Mopoke.—One of the most famous bird cries in Australia is that of the Mopoke, and nothing has caused so much argument as the identity of the bird that utters it. Some ornithologists give the credit to the Boobook Owl, a bird that has a distinct and equally famous note. Many people identify it with the Frogmouth (*Podargus*), which does occasionally utter a semblance of the much debated call. This bird, in fact, is commonly called Mopoke in many parts of the bush; but the proper Mopoke in my native field, north of the Richmond River, is the Red Owl (*Ninox lurida*). The aborigines called it Mobok, whereas *Ninox boobook* was known to them as Boobook, or Bukbuk. In a great many cases the names given by them to birds were imitative of the birds' call notes. Many a night I have listened to the Boobook and the Mopoke calling in neighbouring trees. Both voices were a great pleasure to hear, but while the Boobook's notes were deep-sounding and quickly uttered, as though the bird were excited, the Mopoke's had much of the quality of the Australian Cuckoo, a sweet, lingering, and far-reaching sound. *Ninox lurida* is variously called Night Hawk, Mope Hawk, Hawk Owl, Red Owl, and Mopoke. Its cousin, the Winking Owl (*Ninox connivens*) also utters the Mopoke note.—E. S. SORENSON, R.A.O.U., Sydney.